United Nations A/C.2/56/6

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 November 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Second Committee
Agenda item 107
High-level international intergovernmental consideration of financing for development

Letter dated 14 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, at the opening session of the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held at Doha from 9 to 13 November 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 107.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

01-66048 (E) 291101 291101

Annex to the letter dated 14 November 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Statement of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, at the opening session of the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, held in Doha, Qatar, from 9 to 13 November 2001

We are happy that you have chosen to come to Qatar for the fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), one of the most important international organizations established in the last century.

That the Conference is being held in Doha at this particular time has important regional and international implications. It also opens up many prospects for us to strengthen the world trading system by defining its fundamental principles and affirming its essential components so that it can contribute more effectively to opening up a world of prosperity, stability, communication and amity.

The multilateral trading system has undoubtedly contributed to world economic growth. It has also extended a helping hand to a number of developing countries in boosting their economic and social development, especially in the last two decades. The benefits have not been uniformly spread, however, and they have bypassed many developing countries. This is reflected in income distribution across the world, which is still unacceptably skewed in favour of the few.

The figures show that 80 per cent of the world's inhabitants consume only some 15 per cent of its resources while the rest consume about 85 per cent of them.

If we are looking to the WTO to help propel world economic development, full account must be taken of the needs and expectations of the developing countries whose inhabitants represent a major proportion of the world's population. For this to be done, you the ministers must strive to create an effective mechanism within the WTO that can provide these countries, especially the least-developed among them, with a serious possibility of participating in the elaboration of the foundations of the trading system and in the interpretation of its implications within a fluid context that takes full account of their economic, social and technical parameters, thus helping them derive real benefit from this system in future.

This Conference provides an auspicious opportunity to welcome new members of the Organization representing more than one billion people, a significant step towards its becoming an organization of a universal character.

That this Conference is being held in the Arab region reflects the region's historic interest and involvement in trade going back through many centuries both since and before the advent of Islam. This was reflected in the extensive commercial exchanges within the region itself and, beyond it, with contemporaneous civilizations in Europe, Africa and Asia. It should perhaps be said that the Arab countries, given this fund of historical experience and this deeply rooted commercial

background, can be of service to the world trading system as well as profiting from it.

This Conference gives the State of Qatar an opportunity to introduce itself and to affirm that its economic system is an open and flexible one that accords with the overall objectives of the WTO as exemplified by freedom of trade, guarantees of fair competition and the encouragement of foreign investment. The State of Qatar attaches great importance to attracting foreign investment by providing an inviting climate and establishing favourable and flexible terms for overseas participation in the country.

The responsibility you have today is great. The fourth WTO Ministerial Conference comes at a difficult time when many countries have experienced economic stagnation and slowdown. You will be the focus of attention and all eyes will be upon you until the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration that is satisfactory to all parties, a declaration launching a fresh round of trade negotiations at Doha that strengthens confidence in the Organization, imparts a strong impetus to trade and, at the same time, gives a badly needed stimulus to the world economy.

The world urgently needs a new round that accords a prominent place to development, that promotes the principles of justice and equity in the multilateral trading system and that opens markets fully to goods from the least developed countries and thus contributes to their prosperity.

In view of the many opportunities provided by this Conference, we hope that you will endeavour to make it a success by taking the decisions necessary to formulate appropriate future-oriented programmes for the WTO that seek primarily to promote dialogue among nations and peoples, to strengthen the world trading system so that it will be conducive to peace and stability, and to secure prosperity for all.

A successful Conference would be the best proof that all nations, rich and poor alike, are working together for a world that is more just and that cooperation and mutual understanding are the way to solve our problems.